

NEW PUBLICATIONS

THE TYLERS

THE TYLERS. BY LYON G. TYLER. Two volumes, 8vo. Vol. I. Pp. xv., 633. Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson.

The Tylers commemorated in this somewhat unnecessarily ample work are President Tyler and his father. John Tyler, the elder, was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates during the Revolution; a friend and associate of Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson and other patriots; Speaker of the Virginia Legislature; governor of Virginia from 1808 to 1811; Judge of the Admiralty and General Courts; and at the time of his death, in 1813, Judge of the United States District Court. He was a man of mark in his day, both as a jurist and as a politician, and his personal character seems to have been as profoundly respected by the people of Virginia; he was in short a good type of the gentlemanly politician, strenuous, rhetorical, fond of theories and sincere in his devotion to them, often high-minded, but with a type of the politician who once flourished so freely in Virginia, following the arts of party as a family inheritance and handing on his principles as highly respectable heirlooms.

There is something attractive in the portrait of the old Judge, as it is drawn by this biographer. Even the poetry which an unwise partiality has exposed to the cold light of the printed page is palliated by the domestic feeling which prompted its perpetration. But it must be confessed that Judge Tyler, after all has been said for him, makes no very large figure among the distinguished men in whose labors he participated and whose esteem he enjoyed. His name has not become identified even with the measures for which he fought most earnestly. He was upright, straightforward, energetic and courageous, but not a man of original force or of much political sagacity. He amused himself by claiming descent from Wat Tyler, the rebel against Richard II. There is no certainty whether he did this in jest or in earnest; but his son, the President, accepted the genealogy seriously, and Mr. Lyon Tyler, the biographer, treats it with a solemnity which is almost impressive. We need hardly say that this claim; nobody knows even whether Tyler was this name or the trade of the English rebel; and there is a trifling gap of two hundred and seventy years between him and the latter immigrant to Virginia with whom the history of the Americans Tylers really begins. One cannot help smiling at the impartial complacency with which Mr. Lyon Tyler prides himself on the mythical ancestor who led the commons against the king in the fourteenth century, and the actual ancestor who, having (presumably) fought for the king against the commons in the seventeenth century, came to Virginia where the virgin air was not tainted with the breath of a regicide and usurper.

But it is a familiar fact that the Virginia gentleman who were intensely aristocratic in their personal relations, and royalist in their sympathies during the struggle between the Crown and the Parliament, were the first to revolt when the contest for popular rights was transferred to their own soil. The President's father was one of the earliest, most active, and most daring of the revolutionary party. His patriotism, remarks the biographer, "amounted to a kind of mysticism which placed at his country's disposal his fortune and his unremitted services." Patriotism amounting to "a kind of mysticism" is "an ill phrase, a vile phrase," whose meaning we do not profess to understand. We should describe Judge Tyler as a very practical patriot, who distinguished himself in the Legislature by his zeal to provide money for the revolutionary cause. The end of the war found him among the extreme advocates of State sovereignty, of a weak central government, of jealous restrictions upon Congress; his hatred of Great Britain nearly amounted to rancor; his dread of British influence not only twisted his politics but affected his theories and interpretations of law; he cherished an undying and vengeful animosity against the Tories, and had no mercy for rascals, partly no doubt because he believed in a dangerous monarchical conspiracy among the Federalists. Many excellent men bagged these same errors, and the mistakes of Judge Tyler would not be worth mentioning were it not his biographer so sure that they were marks of superior wisdom.

For Mr. Lyon Tyler seems to be just one hundred years behind his generation. He, too, is satisfied that Federalism was a wicked plot against the liberties of the country, that Hamilton was an enemy of the Republic, that the whole course of constitutional development since the end of the last century has been wrong, that New-England has always been given over to baseness and jobbery, that Virginia is America, and that the greatest of mankind was Thomas Jefferson. "With Virginians," he says, "it is a disputed question which has superior claims to the title 'Father of his country,' Washington or Jefferson. They speak of the calm equanimity of Washington but the *genius* of Jefferson." He regards the old Confederation as vastly superior to the present Union of States; and although his survey of the "times" of the Tylers shows, as even the most imperfect and prejudiced survey of the first years of our government must show, that the Articles of Confederation proved disastrously inadequate to the needs of the country, he insists that there was no defect in them which a little easy tinkering would not have cured, and that the adoption of the constitution was a wicked blunder. It is a curious fact that Judge Tyler was unintentionally one of the principal agents in bringing about this very change. The Constitutional Convention was the outgrowth of a proposal for an inter-State convention to develop remedies for the desperate condition of trade, and of the proposal Judge Tyler was one of the most conspicuous supporters. Mr. Tyler is inclined to attribute the authorship of it to him, rather than to Madison, for while the credit has generally been claimed; but we do not think that he makes out his case. Judge Tyler, at any rate, although he was anxious to give Congress certain temporary authority over trade, was always a bitter opponent of the Constitution which resulted from this scheme. At a point upon which his biographer enlarges in the following fine language: "The late Speaker [Tyler] had been the first to detect a defect in one of the pillars that upheld the beauteous edifice of the Articles of Confederation, whose corner stone had been laid amid general rejoicing. Beyond any man in Virginia he had tugged at the bell in the tower to summon to consultation the skillful mechanics of the States; and, lo! he marked, aghast, an eager, frightened crowd tearing at the sacred structure, dismantling the roof, and cutting down the massive pillars; while out of the ruins he saw—or thought he saw—arising the rugged form of a gloomy Bastille, with iron bars, dismal dungeons, frowning gates, and the sentry ever pacing with measured tread upon the outer wall." There was a strong feeling against the Constitution in Virginia, and it was not accepted by that State until its ratification had been secured by the votes of enough of the others. Judge Tyler was in harmony with his people in lamenting the surrender of State sovereignty, the establishment of a central despotism, and the omission of "a guaranty of power to the South," to protect it against a tyrannical Northern majority. It is strange, however, to find that dislike of the Constitution is still so strong in the family in spite of a century of experience. The spirit in which Mr. Lyon Tyler reviews the old constitutional discussions may be understood when we say that he argues that he finally accepted the Constitution Virginia reserved the right to rescind upon proper occasion, and he leaves discretion, the powers which she tacitly conferred upon the general government, that she bestows upon President Madison the title of chief magistrate "of the Confederation," and that he denounces the overhauling of the Chesapeake by the British man-of-war *Leopard* inside the Virginia Capes as an outrage upon "the sovereignty of the State!"

Judge Tyler's opinions in the Virginia courts cover some important points, the most interesting of which was in the case of Hawkins vs. Kamper, in which he concurred with the full bench in asserting the competency of the judiciary to declare a law void on account of unconstitutionality. This principle was first affirmed by the Supreme Court

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There will be no wish to provoke discussion by saying that it may be true that the North American Continent will be still more emphatically self-contained than it is at present, and that "a popular literature of the United States will develop," but I am sure that the doctrines of President Monroe . . . It is not uninteresting to speculate on those distant possibilities which have been so much insisted upon as being practical, to look to the immediate tendencies of things, and to try to forecast the mutual relations between the two countries for the next twenty, and thirty years that are immediately before us. If we can assure ourselves that those relations are of such a kind as to lead to a state of affairs in which the understanding of mutual interest, we have in that assurance the best possible guarantee that Mr. Gladstone's visions of a hundred years hence are in a fair way to be realized.

THE VILLA FORIN.

ITS TREASURY OF PETRARCHIAN AND ICELANDIC LITERATURE.

THE COLLECTIONS OF PROFESSOR FISKE—NEARLY 2,000 VOLUMES OF PETRARCHIANA.
To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: In a former letter I gave a description and outline history of the Villa Forin at Florence. I now turn to the special treasures which have found a temporary resting-place in this singular old house—a treasure to which my too brief examination, accompanied as it was by the kind explanatory comments of their owner, will hardly enable me to do full justice. These are two collections of books, widely differing in their character, but both brought together by Mr. Fiske, and each nearly unique of its kind. The first relates to the poet Petrarch, the chief figure of the Italian literary renaissance. It is not only the most perfect on this subject, but perhaps one of the most nearly complete collections of works on any single topic ever accumulated by the zeal and industry of an ardent book-collector. It does not quite reach 2,000 volumes, including the various editions of the author's different creations Latin as well as Italian, biographies, commentaries, critical essays, works on Petrarch's contemporaries in their relations to him, and most of his books, treatises, pamphlets, monographs, reviews, articles, bearing in even an indirect way on the poet's life and labor. Of much interest are the few ancient manuscripts of the Sonnets, Canzoni and Triumphs constituting Petrarch's Italian productions. One was written within half a century after the author's death (1374); two others are none but specimens of ornate Italian calligraphy from the middle of the Quattrocento, one of them acquired at a cost of nearly \$1,000; a third is a splendid illuminated vellum codex containing the "Triumph" only, and is one of the best of known texts, dating from about 1410. With these are a few modern manuscripts—works on Petrarchan subjects—as by Continental scholars, which, for one reason or another, never passed through a publisher's hands, as, for instance, a commentary on the Italian poems by Peruginus Moratus (father of the more celebrated Olympia Morata), a professor at Ferrara; it was finished in 1521, was very likely not issued on account of the author's Lutheranism, and has been hitherto supposed by the Italian literary historians to be lost.

PETRARCH IN PRINT.

Of the printed editions of Petrarch's vernacular verse the collection embraces all but three of those issued before 1500, beginning with the first (Venice, 1470), the copy being, it appears, the only absolutely faultless one sold for many years, with margins broad enough to suit the most fastidious of bibliomaniacs, and costing the possessor even more than the manuscript cited above. Beside it stand the second edition (Rome, 1471), the third (Padua 1472), and the subsequent editions of Jensen, Azoguidi, and other early Italian printers. These Petrarch incunabula are all in folio, mostly admirable copies, and often adorned with quaint, rude illustrations indicating the infancy of the graver's art. Of the 170 known editions of the sixteenth century—the period during which the Petrarch cultus culminated—the shelves already show 128, comprising all those of such famous typographers as the Aldines, the Giunta, Francesco da Bologna, Socino, Giolito, and the commentaries of Vellutello, Gonsalvo, Dolce, Fausto and others. The list of editions in the two following centuries is even more complete, while those of the nineteenth century are nearly all present, from the two huge folios of the renowned Parmesan printer, Bodoni, to the paper-bound editions of the Venetian Ungarelli. Not a few of these are printed on vellum; and a few are large-paper copies, or impressions on colored paper in limited editions, so precious to the collector's heart.

As regards the numerous Latin works of Petrarch, biographical, autobiographical, philosophical, historical, political, I find them represented in each case by first editions and by nearly all the later ones. Many of these are of extreme rarity, published, as they often were, particularly during the fifteenth century, in obscure towns of Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and elsewhere, and are rarely in the booksellers' catalogues at a good deal less than their weight in gold, or have been acquired at a cost—and one may guess the price of books in this novel era of a dozen or two times the value of the original—but, amounting in the case of a work of a fair number of folios, to no insignificant sum. In this portion of the collection are included many of the earliest translations of Petrarch's verse, some made into Latin by Petrarch, whose version, owing to the wider range of a diction or a vocabulary of his Italian verse into the twelve or fourteen most important European tongues; the many editions and versions of his work, "De Remedii Fortuna;" the most popular of his letters, "De vita solitaria," and several others of his life of even the slightest importance. Among the minor divisions may be mentioned the works on the various places in which Petrarch resided, such as Avignon, where he was born, and died, and the Val d'Aoste, the resorts of his youth, Padua and Arqua, the residences of his old age, the last-named hamlet among the Etrurian hills of the Apennines being the scene of his death and the site of his tomb.

LAURA

The fair Laura, she of the
 "heartless eyes, where Love took healing stay,"
is represented by three score or more volumes, one of which particularly took my fancy as it bore the queer title, in Italian, of "Why Petrarch did not praise Laura's nose?" Two of three shelves are filled with editions of her works falsely ascribed to Petrarch, and with the poems of his servile imitators, the Petrarchists of the seventeenth century. In separate compartments there are more than three hundred engraved portraits of Petrarch and Laura, many of the finest of impressive, serious and carefully studied sketches of Petrarch localities, and a great number of medals, busts, porcelains and paintings treating of Petrarchan themes. I ought to add that among the books are some rich specimens of antique bindings, while the foremost living craftsman of London, Paris and Italy have contributed fine examples of their skill, with covers of illuminated vellum, and morocco mosaic, and heavy crusted leather, with the most delicate designs and toolings. The volumes are furthermore enriched to profusion with autographs of Petrarch biographers and commentators of every age and land, and of the learned Tassoni, Muratori, Tiraboschi, Marsand, Ugo Foscolo, Leopardi and a host of others. Those who have seen the collection will be quick to acknowledge without precedent, and one which certainly could have been accomplished only by a person thoroughly familiar, from the habits of many years, with the book-world of Europe.

THE ICELANDIC COLLECTION.

Mr. Fiske is accustomed to say that the accumulation of all this Petrarchiana is the whim of his old age; but that the gathering of his other book-collection has been the work of a lifetime. This collection, relative to the island of Iceland, its geography, history, language, and people, is almost as complete, though less extensive, as the other, all handbooks of general reference excepted. It draws little to give less attention to it, but have nevertheless formed some idea of its real interest and completeness. It includes every known interesting description of the island and every published book of travels concerning that wonderful land; all the grammars, dictionaries and other philological treatises regarding its language; every number of every Icelandic Journal issued from 1795—to the date of the first one—to the present time; all the editions of the Icelandic Bible and Testament; the complete proceedings of the Icelandic Althing or Parliament; a good collection of works on Scandinavian mythology;

landscapes; nearly every edition of the ancient Icelandic sagas as well as of the two so-called eddas; with a great body of comment; and lastly, a very full representation of the island's modern literature. There are likewise a few manuscripts, one being an early and still unpublished translation of the "Arzonis," John Barclay's celebrated Latin prose romance, and another a still needed collection of verse compiled in the sixteenth century. Very complete are the sets of works published by the earlier and later Icelandic Literary Society, the Arnæ Magnæus Commission, the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, and other similar learned associations of Scandinavia. The saga edition published in Sweden during the seventeenth century, many of them very rare, and the yet rarer issues of the first Icelandic press at Holar and Skálholt, are nearly all here. Among other things I noticed a shelf of two versions into Icelandic of the works of Homer, Milton, Shakespeare, Klopstock, Pope, Bunyan, the "Arabian Nights," and other foreign books; and yet, perhaps to the present date, of two Icelandic journals published by colonies existing in Canada, one styled *Franskrir* (Progress), and the other taking its name, *Lefur*, from the asserted ante-Columbian discoverer of America.

One or two book-curiosities on these shelves seem to me of peculiar interest. A large-paper copy of the "Antiquitates Americanæ," edited by Rafn, the Copenhagen antiquary, formerly belonged to the library of Prince Napoleon and bears its official stamp. It was accidentally saved during the conflagration by the Communists of a portion of the Palais Royal, but still shows on its margin the black traces made by the flames of the Communard petroleum. The copy of the first edition of the Icelandic Bible (Holar, 1584)—a bulky folio—cost the owner a church organ. During his trip to Iceland in 1879 Mr. Fiske found that a certain parish possessed this venerable relic of the Reformation. Accordingly Mr. Fiske bought at Edinburgh a small church organ, which was sent to the island and exchanged for the Bible. One of the unpublished manuscripts is the fullest history of the Reformation in Iceland, and of Icelandic literature, that is of the period since the Reformation. It was presented to this collection by its author, who has given to the world an admirable history of printing in Iceland, and the first account of Icelandic book-presses. This gentleman now fills, as he has filled for several years, the humble position of policeman in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland—a fact which indicates the spread of learning among this remarkable Northern people.

The two collections, so widely differing in character, which I have tried to describe, are both placed in one apartment of the National Library, the famous old carved shelving and furniture, the historical frescoes under the ceiling, the fine Oriental rugs on the floor, the abundant light and the striking bindings, making it perhaps the handsomest of libraries in the world. Adjoining it is the owner's study, an Oriental-looking sanctum in which, aided by a copyist, Mr. Fiske is preparing complete catalogues of his books, which are to be printed and bound in the form of a history of Icelandic literature, and which will be material aids to our bibliographical knowledge of the special topics they treat. It is understood that the ultimate destination of both these invaluable collections is to be the University of Copenhagen, to which Mr. Fiske was so long librarian. It may well rejoice at the prospect of one day possessing such treasures.

THEODORE STANTON.
Paris, Feb. 10, 1885.

New Publications.

PERSONAL TRAITS OF BRITISH
AUTHORS. A series now being published by the Messrs. Scribner, says the *Harvard "Times"* will prove to be the most interesting of the season. The editor, Mr. E. T. Mason, has followed the motto of the *Illustrated London News*—"He has very little to say about them himself, but he collects a great variety of brief quotations from others. Thus we see in turn just how noted authors were viewed by each other."

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